



June 1996 Contemplation Theme

The Path

By Rama Berch, C.S.Y.T., E-RYT 500

Yoga is a spiritual path that encompasses all the aspects of being human. Hatha yoga works with your body, bhakti yoga “exercises” your heart and jnana yoga stretches your mind. All give you the experience of transcendence. Whichever of the tools of yoga you are using, you are traveling “The Path.” To talk about a path implies there is a beginning point and a destination. The destination is so important that you can get impatient that you are not there yet.

This happens when you are driving, too often in a rush to arrive at your destination. If the traffic signal takes too long or the freeway has become a parking lot, the drivers inch forward relentlessly. An opening appears and you race into it, only to fume when you have to stop again. Arriving, you are exhausted from the stress of the drive. There is a serious drawback to approaching life with this emphasis on the end result: The end result of life is death. Everything in between birth and death is a process. You must actually enjoy the ride, rather than fuming because you are not yet at your destination.

Personally, I love traffic jams. They make life so immediate! There is no future, because there is nowhere to go and no time in which I can plan to be “there.” I put on music of my choice and sing along, or I do a few long yoga breaths (ujjayi pranayama). I love that no one knows exactly where I am. I do not even have to be “who” I am. For a while all that stuff does not exist. When I arrive at my destination, I feel refreshed and rejuvenated. I had a good time.

The sages describe the spiritual path as one of becoming “realized.” This means you do not go somewhere else, do something different, or become someone else; instead, you realize something that was always there. Currently, time seems to have a linear quality, with the past behind you and the future in front. However, you will realize there are other dimensions to time. This moment is not merely a point between past and future. There is a dimensionality to this moment that includes eternity. The spiritual path is the looking into that dimension. Then you learn to live in the multiple dimensions of your own existence all the time (except, of course, that time doesn’t exist!).

Just as there is no destination on the spiritual path, there is no starting point. There is a point where you realize you have been on the path for some time. You may even begin to consciously cooperate with it. But when did it begin? Perhaps all of life is that spiritual path, and some people are cooperating with it while others resist it. You may even find that you do both.

The tools of yoga can help move you along the path when you are consciously cooperating with your own process of transformation. In addition, these tools are especially helpful when you are resisting, because that is when you most need the help. This is why sometimes the hardest part of yoga class is simply getting there. Once you get over that hump, everything else is easier.

Namaste,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rama'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small heart symbol above the letter 'a'.